

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3128

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 0632

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CI

SUBJ: CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTRY VIEWS ON PERU/CHILE/BOLIVIA

1. IN THE COURSE OF AN UNEVENTFUL TOUR D'HORIZON JANUARY 20 WITH THE ACTING CHILEAN FOREIGN MINISTER, ARMY COLONEL VALDES, I TOUCHED UPON THE BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR PROBLEM AND RECENT ANDEAN WAR SCARE TALK. VALDES RESPONDED CALMLY, WITHOUT GIVING ANY INDICATION THAT THE CHILEANS ANTICIPATED ANY DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NEAR TERM. HOWEVER, WITHOUT GOING INTO SPECIFICS, HE STRESSED THE DE-STABILIZING CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT ARMS IMBALANCE; THE DANGER OF A "CHAIN REACTION" IF AN ATTEMPT WERE MADE TO OVERRUN ONE LATIN AMERICAN BORDER (OBVIOUSLY THE CHILEAN-PERUVIAN FRONTIER); AND WHAT HE REGARDED AS THE INEVITABLE INVOLVEMENT OF THE USG IN SUCH AN EVENT. I SAID THE U.S. HAD THIS PROBLEM, LIKE OTHERS IN LATIN AMERICA, UNDER CONSTANT STUDY; AND THAT WE WERE AWARE OF THE POTENTIALITIES FOR TROUBLE WHICH EXISTED.

2. WE WENT OVER THE PROCEDURAL SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR INSOME
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DETAIL. TO SUM UP, VALDES INDICATED THAT METTERS WERE AT A FAIRLY COMPLETE IMPASSE WITH BOTH PERU AND BOLIVIA. THE FORMER WAS TRYING TO RECOVER SOME CONTROL OVER TERRITORY NOW DEFINITELY CHILEAN, AND CHILE COULD NEVER PERMIT THIS. THE LATTER WAS PROPOSING THAT THE GOC CEDE WITHOUT RECOMPENSE TERRITORY TO CREATE A BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR. NO CHILEAN GOVERNMENT COULD DO THIS AND SURVIVE.

3. VALDES MADE IT CLEAR THAT, IN CHILEAN EYES, THE CORRIDOR ISSUE WAS OF SUCH IMPORTANCE THAT IT HAD TO BE DISCUSSED AT OR CLOSE TO FOREIGN MINISTER LEVERL. AT THE SAME TIME HE IMPLIED, WITHOUT BEING SPECIFIC, THE THE IMPENDING MEETINGS OF BILATERAL CHILE-PERU AND CHILE-BOLIVIA COMMISSIONS MIGHT SOMEHOW LEAD TO A BREAK IN THE SITUATION. AS FAR AS I COULD TELL FROM PROBING, THIS WAS A FAINT AND UNSUBSTANTIATED HOPE, AND NOTHING MORE. MY OVERALL IMPRESSION IS ONE OF NO DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT FOR THE TIME BEING.

4. COMMENT: THOUGH PERSONALLY FRIENDLY, VALDES IS ONE OF THE LESS COMMUNICATIVE MEMBERS OF THE GOC FOREIGN OFFICE HIERARCHY. MOREOVER, AT LEAST AS REGARDS THE MILITARY PROBLEM, THE FOREIGN OFFICE IS NOT NECESSARILY THE BEST SOURCE OF INFORMATION RE GOC VIEWS. NEVERTHELESS, THIS MEETING RATHER REINFORCES OUR CONCLUSION THAT, WHILE WORRIED, THE CHILEANS ARE NOT LOSING THEIR COOL.
POPPER

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